

## ASSORTED WORSHIP RESOURCES

### FOR CHILDREN'S SUNDAY WITH RESPECT TO PALESTINIAN CHILDREN

#### *Prayers*

God, who calls us to Love,

We give you thanks for the lives of children. In the smiles of babies, in the wonder of toddlers and pre-schoolers, the imaginations of school-aged children learning and the wisdom they embody, we see your image, your compassion and your amazing grace. May we be bold in our love of them as you are in your love of us.

Jesus, who calls us to Follow,

You welcomed children--you taught that they are the embodiment of your kin-dom, the essence of your goodness and the reflection of all that is good and hope-filled in your world. May we follow in your ways so that they are not just welcomed into our communities, but deeply valued for all that they offer, for the ways they care, and for how they see the world—full of possibilities, solutions and dreams.

Spirit, who calls us to Wonder,

May this time of worship be a call to action—that adults will join together in advocacy and justice-seeking for the rights of children in our homes, our communities, in our country and around the world. Particularly on this day, may we lift our voices and make our choices so that Palestinian Children might know safety amid war. May they no longer be taken from their homes and families, caught in adult political and military violence. May they know a world of peace and justice, rather than fear and hatred. None of us can know the fullness of life until we all do. Bless us with courage to speak and act, with compassion to love and care, with hope to know that the world can and should be a peaceful, hopeful, inclusive place where dreams of children can flourish and grow.

May your light surround us as we pray and live together, part of your expansive creation. In the name of the One who said "Let the children come to Me."

Amen.



*( written by Rev. Catherine Stuart, 2020)*

## A prayer:

We have learned about the work of the “No Way to Treat a Child” Campaign led by Mission and Service Partner, ***Defense for Children International - Palestine***, and supported by the national body of the United Church of Canada.

We stand together as members of the United Church of Canada to commit ourselves anew to the work of justice walking with Palestinian children who are defenseless and abused.

In the words of the ancient Hebrew prophets, we commit to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with all creation.

May we remain faithful Until Justice rolls down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

May we be willing to be the answer to the prayers we pray.

Amen, and so be it.



*(written by Patricia Mercer)*

## Videos

Rev. Catherine Stuart, Minister for Children, Youth, and Young Adults, serving Atlantic Regions shares the above prayer.

Patricia Mercer delivers 5 minute message at Gower St. United Church, Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 (starting at minute 49) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AeOH9eEW7OY&t=2s>

Video from a young Palestinian Activist (5 minutes) [https://youtu.be/cMWuk\\_mi5kw](https://youtu.be/cMWuk_mi5kw)

*"There is only one child in the world and the child's name is All Children.  
This child speaks our name." - Carl Sandburg*

## **WHO WILL SPEAK FOR THE CHILDREN? WE WILL!**

**Reader 1:** Children are in a central role throughout Biblical scriptures. Among God's promises to us was a promise of children - a promise of generations to inhabit and care for the earth.

Children are often described as one of the most important gifts that God can offer or that a nation or people can offer to God.

When God gave the Law to Moses, it was in exchange for a promise from the people of Israel that they would teach it faithfully to their children through the generations.

In the Gospels, Jesus instructs his followers, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me."

From the Old Testament, reading from Genesis 33:13-14:

**Reader 2:** My Lord knows that the children are frail, and that the flocks and herds giving suck are a care to me; ...I will lead on slowly. . . according to the pace of the children.

**Reader 1:** Reading from Deuteronomy 6: verses 4-7:

**Reader 2:** Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.  
And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children.

**Reader 1:** From Proverbs 22:6:

**Reader 2 ;** Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

**Reader 1:** Psalm 103:17-18:

**Reader 2:** The steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, to those who keep His covenant and remember to do His commandments.

**Reader 1:** and from Isaiah 49:20.

**Reader 2:** The children ...will yet say in your ears: "The place is too narrow for me; make room for me to dwell in".

**Reader 1:** And from the New Testament: from Matthew 7:9-11:

**Reader 2:** Or what (parent) of you, if (your child) asks for bread will give a stone?  
Or if one asks for a fish, will give a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

**Reader 1:** From Mark 9: verses 35-37

**Reader 2:** "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." And he took a child, and put him in the midst of them and taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but Him who sent me."



## *Points for reflection:*

Canada has a National Children's Day which is to be celebrated annually on November 20th. On March 9, 1993, the House of Commons unanimously passed Bill C-371, Child's Day Act, and on May 5, 1993, the bill received royal assent. November 20 was chosen since it is the anniversary of the UN ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Children (1989).

The United Church General Council passed a resolution at its meeting in 1994 designating the Sunday closest to November 20th as "Children's Sunday" to celebrate children as a gift, to raise awareness of children's needs, and to envision ways the church can better speak up for the needs and rights of all children and youth.

This Sunday would certainly be a very appropriate time for local churches to educate members about the "No Way to Treat a Child" campaign and to motivate and provide resources and ways for people to advocate for the needs and rights of Palestinian children.

Love for God is inseparable from love for neighbor. Few of our neighbours are quite so vulnerable as children, who cannot fend for themselves. Children are dependent on adult care and protection.

Too many children's hopes and dreams for a full life have been betrayed - certainly that is true for the Palestinian children born and living under occupation or in Israel. We have heard statistics and stories which give flesh and blood to the numbers. We have a renewed sense of urgency to speak and to act on behalf of these children. Statistics, alarming as they are, remain numbers until the voices of the victims are heard.

We commit ourselves to enable these children's voices and stories to be heard.

We commit ourselves to challenge our political leaders, church leaders, and neighbours in communities across Canada

We commit ourselves to grow a groundswell of care and protection for the rights and basic needs of these vulnerable Palestinian children.



### Prayer for Families

(Text: Virginia Sargent; Tune: DIX – “For the Beauty of the Earth”; Used with permission of V. Sargent.)

1. For the beauty of the Earth  
For the glory of the skies  
For the families everywhere  
With their sad and joyful cries  
*God of all to Thee we raise  
This our hymn of grateful Praise.*
  
2. For the parents giving birth  
For the varied family ties  
For each Youth whose life of worth  
May be missed by human eyes'  
*God of all to Thee we raise  
This our hymn of grateful Praise.*
  
3. For the homeless, hopeless ones  
Seeking life despite despair  
For the nations buying guns  
While the children wait for care.  
*God of all, this plea we raise  
Help us change our hurtful ways.*
  
4. Thanks for gifts all persons bring  
Love and trust and open hands,  
While we join our Praise and sing,  
Help us do what love demands.  
*God of all this prayer we raise  
Let us bring forth better days.*



**The Rights of the Child can be summarized under three broad headings:**

1. The right to survival – through the provision of adequate food, shelter, clean water, and primary health care;
2. The right to protection – from abuse, neglect and exploitation, including the right to special protection in times of war; and
3. The right to develop – in a safe environment, through the provision of formal education, constructive play, advanced health care and the opportunity to participate in the social, economic, religious and political life of the culture – free from discrimination.

*One of the wisest things Nelson Mandela ever said was this: “There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.” These millions of children belong to all of us. How will our society’s soul be judged?*

“A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.” Matthew 2:18

The Holy Spirit gives us courage “to hear the voices of people long silenced.”

In the occupied West Bank of Palestine, there are many voices that we need to hear. Among them are voices that do not belong to the leaders or elites. They are young, shackled, and locked up behind bars. They are voices of invisible children who will influence and shape the future of the region. Children’s voices are among those most frequently and full silenced.

Today, children represent nearly 50 % of Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Instability and violence define much of their lives. Instead of growing up with a law-based, negotiated settlement founded on universal human rights principles, justice, and respect for human dignity, Palestinian youth have had their futures stifled and suppressed by systemic discrimination, constant settlement expansion, and prolonged military occupation.

Palestinian children are overwhelmingly accused of throwing stones, an offense that can lead to a potential maximum sentence of 10 to 20 years depending on a child’s age.